# SILKSONG ZINE

## WHAT'S IN IT!?

# FOREWORD

As the release date of Silksong comes closer it was thought that a zine before the game came out would be fun for the community. This zine was made as a love letter to the game and a small encapsulation of the hype that has been running through the fandom over the last few years.

This zine is the collaboration of over 20 artists and writers made over the course of about one month. Do send the contributors love via their socials as without them this project would not be possible.

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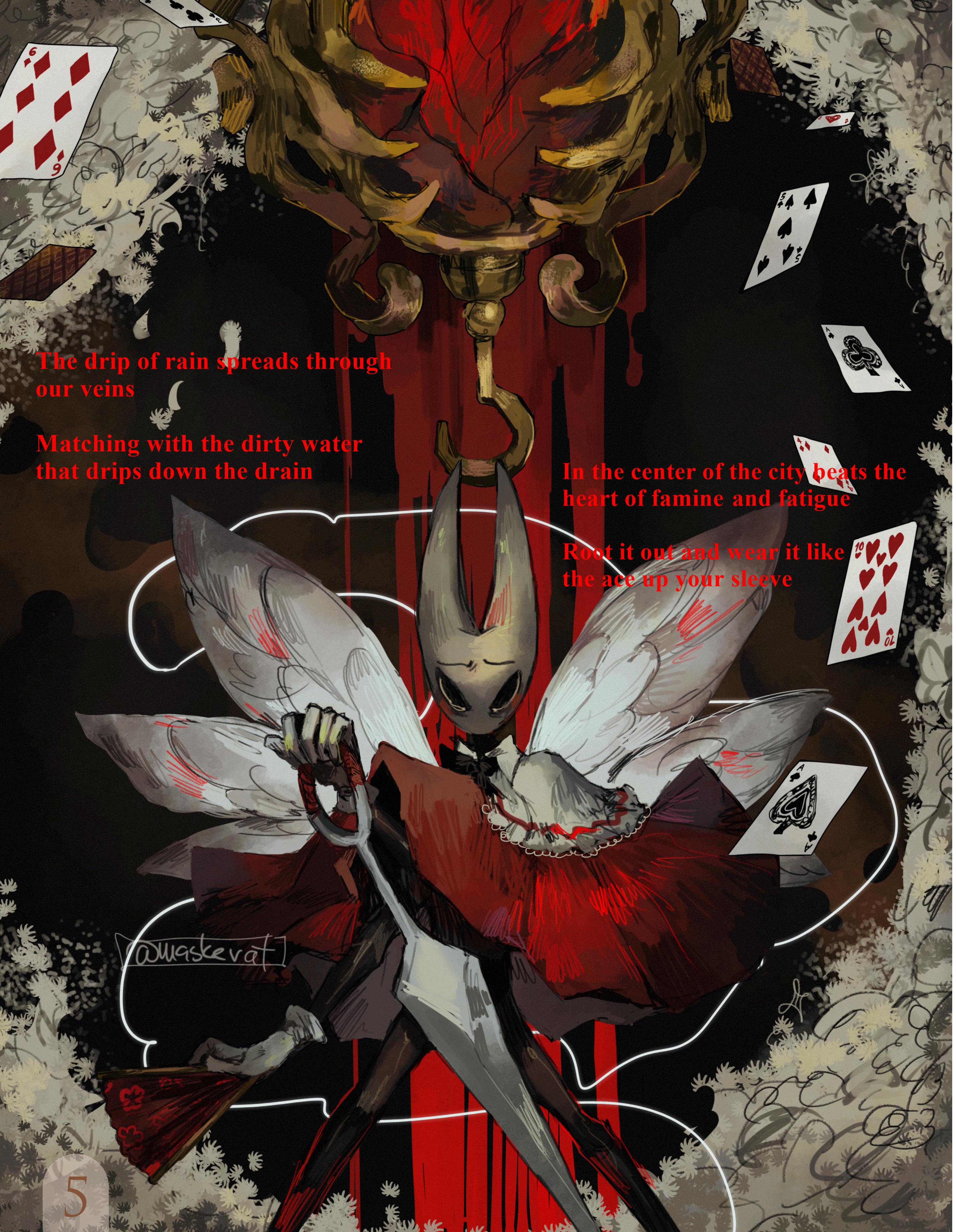
SILKSONG
2025!
Sevilai

STELLARTISTIC
2025


The drip of rain spreads through our veins
Matching with the dirty water that drips down the drain
In the center of the city beats the heart of famine and fatigue
Root it out and wear it like the ace up your sleeve
@waskevat

# BLOODIED COTTON

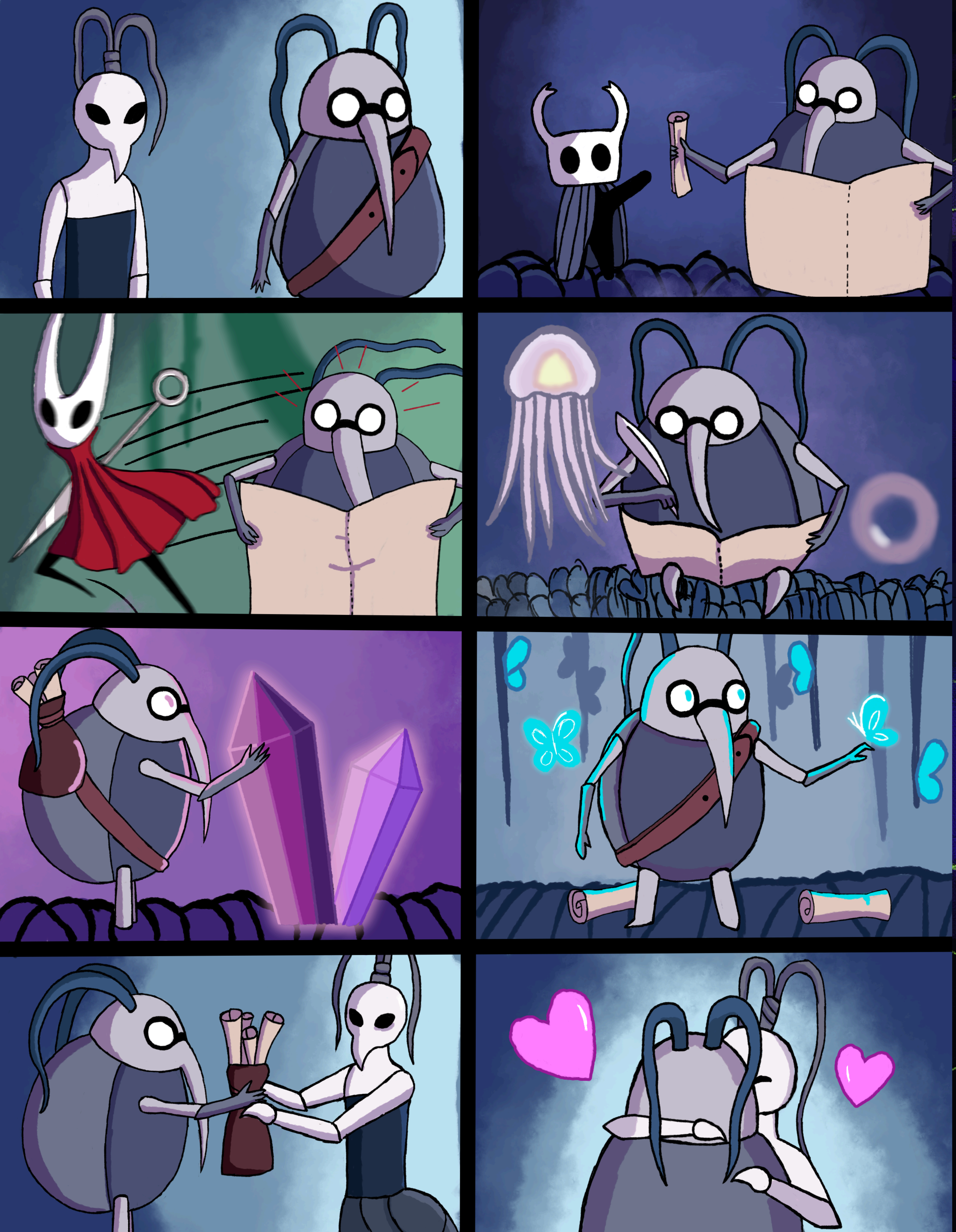
Death lingers on you like the dents in armor
Like the words of a mourner
You walk in the path of others
Eat the food and drink of others
Burdened with the bonds of others
Toiling against this self made cause
A victim of the world appetite left you to gain claws
Afterall what else would this wretched world want

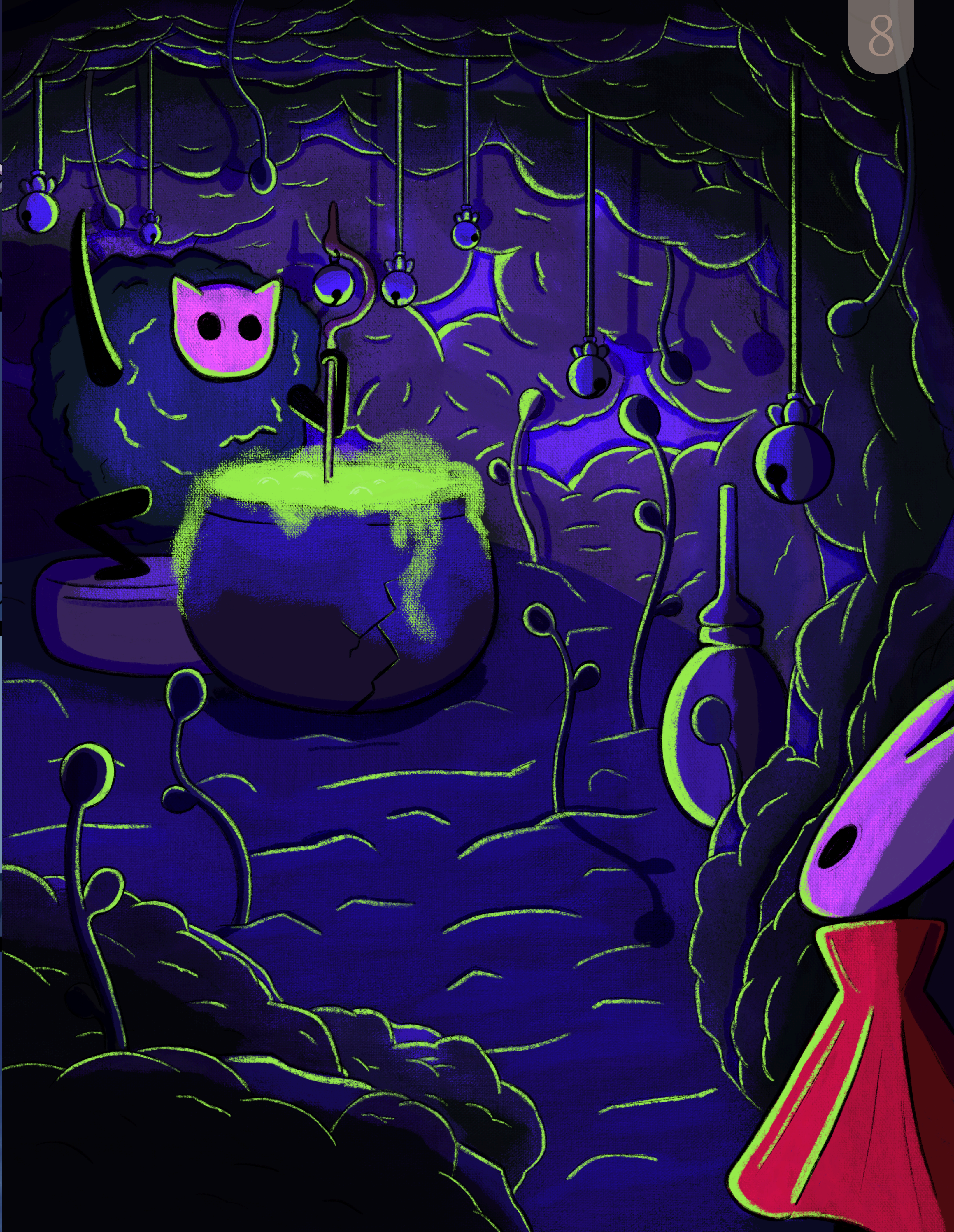
Outside of this haunted home
Has turned from ash and dust to a bitterest tomb
Adorned in flesh and blood of those forgotten
Has lain us out row by row and stuffed us with cotton
Here sleeps the bodies of the royals and the poor
Struggling and scrambling to pull apart the grandeur
Eternally intertwined between one another
Picking at praises and prayers to smother

Little by little the memories fade
Like the prickle of grass or the cut of a blade
Washing away hopes and dreams
Peels back a drooling calm which settles into a stagnant stream
Pushing the world apart leaving it to clatter and fracture
Leaving room for the newfound rapture

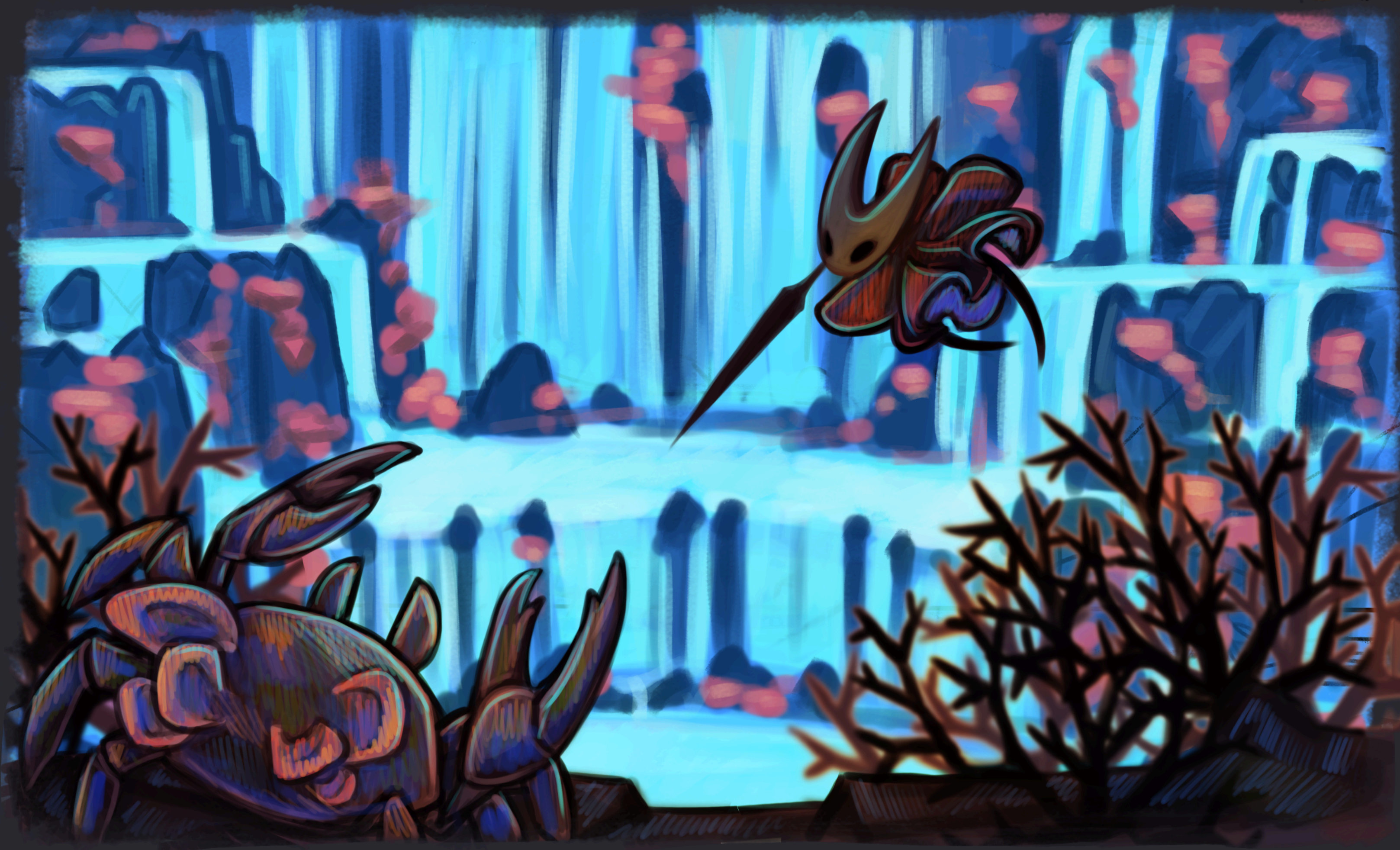
The drip of rain spreads through our veins
Matching with the dirty water that drips down the drain

In the center of the city beats the heart of famine and fatigue
Root it out and wear it like the ace up your sleeve
It's a shame that it ended like this
Overgrown sprawling against itself, in a pitiful metamorphosis
At last you'll be the shining piece out of this worthlessness





AgSilver33



# THE CONVERSATION

Hornet wasn't expecting to see the little ghost so soon after their second battle, though their appearance was not unwelcomed. However, knowing the ghost put her mother to rest was a jarring feeling she would probably never shake.

Or, that feeling may be from having a blast of magic shot at you.

The little ghost claimed to have only done so to get her attention, seeing as Hornet has proved herself to be much faster than them. Them. Not an 'it' like Hornet was told all those years ago. By older, now dead bugs, trying to drill it into her.

*"The Knight is our savior, the mission it is on is most important. You will do it well by not bothering it with your nonsense."*

She pushes her thoughts of the past aside. Afterall, the lies that those fools believed in have been revealed now.

The little ghost waves their arm to get her attention. They're holding something- a piece of parchment with writing on it- out to her. Completely unaware of the fact they're living proof of what Hornet believed in. Of what she saw in the Hollow Knight.

She takes the parchment and reads it. She pauses, then reads it again. She narrows her eyes to see if she's made a mistake. Years before disaster struck, she was given the best teachers in all of Hallownest. While the little ghost used the written form of a language from a neighboring kingdom, she wasn't struggling to read it. Rather, the message is what made her mind fill with questions and her heart race.

Hornet isn't sure she says anything understandable to the little ghost before she takes off. She has a feeling they expected this reaction though. Among the living bugs in Hallownest, none can truly say they've returned home to the Kingdom.

Except for one.

---

Hornet had been lurking around the edge of Fog Canyon when Monomon's seal was broken.

She knew what happened the moment it happened. Monomon's spirit was released for good, and another seal on the Temple was gone. It also meant he was there.

Before she trained with the best of the land, she was given a tutor. Well, several tutors. Each one had been instructed to "turn Hornet into something presentable." Each one had failed, having been chased off by her "wild nature" and "brutish attitude."

All except for one.

When all of the best tutors in Hallownest were exhausted, Herrah turned to Monomon for help. It had seemed Monomon herself was truly busy, but the teacher believed she knew of the perfect replacement. And she was right. Monomon's suggested tutor taught Hornet until the Hollow Knight was imprisoned. Then, he disappeared without a trace.

It was the longest she had ever had a tutor. The longest she had known someone who seemed to understand her. To say she was eager to see him again was an understatement. When she arrives at where the little ghost directed her to, her landing is sloppy. Her nail clatters to the ground after she hastily pulls it to her side. She usually presents herself as graceful, precise, deadly.

Any grace she has leaves her when she catches sight of him. Sitting on the shore of the lake just like the little ghost told her. A familiar nail stands upright in the sand beside him. Still looking polished and battle ready as ever, despite the noticeable age it has put on. Like many things in the kingdom, he looks like a piece of it taken out of time. A lost relic she never knew survived- and yet here he is. Sitting along the Blue Lake, nail at rest beside him, and partaking in the serenity of the cavern.

It's almost unfair. Even after hundreds of years, he still falls into old habits. After hundreds of years living away from the kingdom, he can still come here like it's normal.

A memory threatens to surface but its ascent is cut off. She's sure she never made a sound, but the sand still gets disturbed as he turns around. His actions are fluid, and even more unfairly, like clockwork. In a second, he's facing her. In the back of her mind, some long forgotten urge prompts her feet to move towards him. To sit by his side and partake in the peace of the lake. Just like before.

The sound of sand shifting and the scuffle of feet fill her ears. Arms are around her in a second and a body collides with her own.

"*Hornet-*" her name is said almost breathlessly in her ear. There is a ragged edge to his voice, as if his throat had been torn up.

The sudden hug doesn't knock her down. She's spent many years honing her own body, even after he left. Though, for whatever reason, it takes all her strength to hold the both of them up. It's as if the true weight of all the years of worry, of stress, of disaster and fighting and pain and decay is all falling on her now. The death of her mother and her people. The tortured existence of her sibling. Of the disappearance of her trusted mentor, the only person that was there for her in the cold, distant palace. The only person that told her the truth.

"Quirrel." She replies softly, and falls to her knees in the sand.

A despair seemed to have settled over the both of them. She isn't sure how long they sat there in each other's arms, holding the other as if they would disappear at any moment.

Based on what the little ghost had said, there was a chance she would only find a nail at the lake.

Her childhood mentor was just as emotional as before. Tears poured from the open holes in the mask, so much so he had to remove it lest he drown in them. They fell onto her cloak, dampening her usually warm garment, but she could care less. Something more shocking happened, pulling her attention away from keeping dry. Tears fell from her own eyes. Something she didn't know she could still do. All her tears felt like they had been shed years ago. Deep in the Weaver's Den. Next to the bed of another who would never rise again.

After a while, when their own eyes had run dry, they just laid there in the sand. She almost felt like a child again. When she wasn't with her mother, she was with Quirrel. And when she wasn't with Quirrel, she was somewhere where she definitely wasn't supposed to be. Her sibling's side.

Quirrel's arms shook as he held her, while his grip on her cloak remained firm. She was resolute that they would remain there for quite some time. Which is why she was surprised when Quirrel rose, gently urging her up by not letting go. Though some of her strength seemed to return to her since Quirrel couldn't pull her all the way. The little ghost had mentioned he had been weakened. To determine how much would be a gamble.

The fact Quirrel had made it to the Blue Lake from Fog Canyon unharmed isn't surprising. The Canyon had been his home for years before she was born, and he traversed it easily. Similarly to how she traveled in Deepnest. The rest of Hallownest was a breeze compared to that explosive landscape.

Maybe the journey had tired him. Last she saw him, he had been camping in Greenpath, but he has none of his travel gear now. Maybe he couldn't bring it with.

Her recounting comes to an end when Quirrel gently squeezes her arm with a shaky hand.

"Hornet," he says, voice soft and even more ragged than before. They're sitting side by side at the water's edge now. Waves of familiarity eat at her mind, a flood of memories she wants to think about, but she holds them back. She doesn't want to think about the past when a piece of it is sitting right here in front of her.

"Did you recognize me?" The question sounds vague but she has no trouble understanding what he means. His voice noticeably sounds hoarse, and so she offers her canteen to him. He doesn't take it at first, so she shoves it in his hands.

"At first, when I watched you approach, no." She admits. "When you got close I had thought you were a bug I had never encountered before. When you spoke your voice sounded foreign. As if multiple accents of other languages were overlapping one another."

Quirrel had yet to take a drink of water, so she tapped the canteen with a knuckle. That seemed to do the trick. She watches him open the top and take a sip before continuing.

"I like to believe I would've recognized your fighting style had I not gotten so angry."

Quirrel lowers the canteen. "Angry?" he says in a confused voice.

She nods. “I recognized your nail. When you drew it, I was thrown off. I spent years without a hint of knowledge on what had happened to you. So when a stranger arrives and wields the only piece of you I have seen in *centuries* I-”

She trails off, emotion rising in her chest. She pushes against it.

“I felt a rage come over me. I wanted to know why a stranger had your nail. I wanted to drag out every drop of information they had about you because I needed to know if they took away someone I cared about while I didn’t even know where you had gone.”

There's a beat of silence until-

“And what stopped you?” Quirrel asks despite knowing the answer. They both know she wouldn’t have stopped her hunt even if he had bested her.

“Monomon’s Mask.” she answers. “After it had defended you, it felt like a swath of magic surrounding me had been removed. The attack threw me off- my head was pounding and I couldn’t focus. I backed off to get my bearings and it was only until I was back in Deepnest did I realize what happened. That I realized who you were.”

The silence returns.

Quirrel’s hand shakes as he holds the canteen. When the shaking becomes too much he rests it on his lap. It doesn't go unnoticed.

“What happened in the Archives?”

Quirrel startles. “How did you know I came from the Archives?”

She gives him a humorless look. “I may have not known the whole plan as a child, but I was able to put the pieces together when you arrived *with* Monomon's mask.”

Quirrel flinches at the name, making her pause. Right, Monomon.

She continues, gently this time. “I have been in the Archives after the Dreamers were sealed away. I saw Monomon in her chamber. Even with her face obscured I could tell her mask was gone.”

Her mentor takes the information in, nodding solemnly. Then-

“And, how did you evade Uumuu?”

She withers at the question. “I stayed at the White Palace once the King's plan had been enacted. In some- twisted form of “fatherly love”- he brought me to visit each of the Dreamers. We saw my mother last.”

It was the first time she saw her mother after being put to sleep.

Quirrel nods solemnly. He had always known how distant the Pale King kept her. How he treated her like a reminder of his mistakes. And yet, she was treated the best out of all of her siblings. She had seen the pit long before the little ghost reopened it.

A hand is placed on hers. She sighs and reaches out her upper arm and places it on his.

“To answer your question, there were spells placed on both me and Monomon’s mask. I don’t know what all of them were, but once Monomon regained her mask they were rapidly removed.”

He takes a moment to think before continuing.

“I had assumed there was a spell to assist me with energy but the rapid drain of Soul could also be the case.”

“I see.” She unwinds some of her silk and easily threads it into the proper pattern. Cutting it off with a claw, she ties it around Quirrel’s wrist. Removing her hands, it starts to gently glow after a few seconds. Quirrel remains silent, looking down at the bracelet with an air of familiarity. For him to know the weave would make sense.

“Your mother had requested I help you with your weaving.” he said after a few seconds. He removes his hand to get a closer look at the bracelet. “Since the Weavers preferred to remain in Deepnest, Herrah was the one to teach me their designs.”

Hornet feels a drop of disbelief in her chest. “My mother taught you to weave?”

“Yes.” Quirrel replies, moving the bracelet around. His hands shake considerably less now. “But only the basics. Only what she was teaching you.”

Quirrel stares out at the blue water, eyes unfocused and lost. Now she understands why the little ghost was concerned. She had seen that look in bugs before.

“What will you do now?” she asks.

He takes a moment to answer.

“I’m not sure.” he lies. “What is there to do now that my purpose has been served?”

She takes his hand into hers and holds it tight. Quirrel looks at her, a deep sadness in his eyes.

“Then find another purpose.” Her words sound more like a command than something soothing, but that doesn’t matter. “Even I, the princess of a dead kingdom, found purpose. I am not just the protector of this forgotten land, I have fought for others in the past. Others who needed the help of a people-less ruler.”

“You’ve left Hallownest?” Quirrel is obviously deflecting but his question ignites a glimmer of hope in her chest.

“Yes,” she answers. “Have you ever heard of a place called Pharloom?”

FANGEL°

# SHE WHO WOULD WEAVE TOGETHER THE WORLD

Even now that the spell laid by the Pale King over Hallownest is fading away, now that to leave the fallen kingdom behind isn't certain to result in losing one's life or one's mind—or both—the crossing to kingdoms beyond remains more than perilous, and Hornet is one of the few fortunate enough to know for certain that there *is* more in the lands beyond. There are others, of course; the bug who runs the map shop in Dirtmouth and her mapmaking husband have made it abundantly clear that they came from elsewhere to map this place, and would perhaps depart for more uncharted lands with very little hesitation once he's had enough of Hallownest. But people like them are outliers, when considered against far too many others.

Hornet hadn't necessarily *wanted* to leave Hallownest, even so. Especially not now that, for the first time in a *very* long time, she finds herself with something akin to hope for the future. The Infection is gone, through means that she doesn't entirely understand herself but somehow hadn't involved the death of the birth-cursed Hollow Knight. She knows their other sibling, little Ghost, had done... something.

It *was* effective, whatever it was. But she hasn't seen any sign of them since the day that the seal on the Black Egg Temple broke, and neither has anyone else in Hallownest. This has *not* been for lack of searching for them—on her part, and that of others, though Hornet would argue she knows much of Hallownest far better now than she ever did before simply by virtue of how much of it she has personally *scoured*. Hornet can confidently say, at this point, that there are only three possibilities for where Ghost could be.

Either they are *in* the Abyss—somewhere that Hornet cannot go, and would not wish returning to on the one bug she knows who can—or they are somewhere not in Hallownest.

(Or they are dead, but given the numerous occasions they had died upon the blade of Hornet's own needle only to wander back up within minutes, largely none the worse for wear, for another round... Hornet isn't certain that Ghost knows *how* to stay dead, and she personally refuses to believe that they've since learned without irreconcilable proof of their demise.)

Whatever *has* happened to Ghost—though knowing them, it's a bit more likely that Ghost happened to something else—Hornet needs answers. *Conclusive* answers.

And so, Pharloom it is.

She's never been before. Neither had her mother, Herrah the Beast, nor Herrah's mother before her. But it's said that every weaver knows the way back to their ancestral home deep within their chitin, and for all that Hornet is only half a weaver, she can feel that tug too. A deep yearning she hadn't been able to recognize until she knew to look for it, until she *tried* looking for it herself.

(Perhaps more accurately: until she set aside her pride, took a brief trip to what little's left of Deepnest, and begged Midwife for help.)

In truth, she hadn't been entirely certain that Pharloom existed until she became desperate enough to begin digging. To discern the truth that lay within the old stories. Hornet was a daughter of Deepnest, but a daughter of Hallownest too, and it had always been the policy of Hallownest's ruler to deny the existence of anything he could not control, in one way or another. Pharloom was too far removed from Hallownest's borders for him to consider taking it for himself, if he was even capable of such a thing, and so denial it was.

But denial will not bring Hornet's sibling back, and while she can't recall *who* told her this story—was it her mother? Midwife? Someone else who, in all likelihood, perished when Deepnest fell to the Infection?—she recalls it... strangely well, all the same.

She has little else to do during the journey. The further she gets from Hallownest, or *any* other kingdom, the less in *general* there has been. Constant vigilance on the first day became paranoia that she was missing something by the second, and cautious resignation to the fact that there simply isn't much out here after that. She assumes there will be more once she is closer to Pharloom, but for now...

For now, she has altogether too much time to herself. To her own thoughts, and to remember the story of the goddess who wove the world together.

* * *

Long before Deepnest, in a land that would come to be known as the Kingdom of Pharloom, there were a great many of those who would come to call themselves weavers. Back then, they were known only as spiders, and the name for their people was the only thing that any two groups could consistently agree on. There were nearly as many individual groups of spiders as there were spiders, in those days, and none of them got along with each other particularly well—or at all, in some cases!

Alliances could be made and broken at the drop of a mask. Wars were born out of the most trivial of disagreements, and it was all too common for spiders to end up fighting their own family members. Sibling against sibling, parent against child...

So it was for the spider who would become the first weaver, the youngest of *nine* siblings—yes, nine, that wasn't an omen of misfortune back then—before her family was rather literally torn apart. The infighting among the spiders of the land had taken their parents first, and scattered the spider's siblings. She hadn't lost any of hers yet, but given what happened to the rest of the family, it was only a matter of time.

"Something has to change," the young spiderling said to herself, for she knew full well that her family was far from the only one being torn apart. "We can't go on like this."

Some of the spiders agreed with her, but disagreed on how to go about ending the wars, and could not put aside their pride for long enough to reach a compromise. Some disagreed, sure that they could end the fighting in their favor, heedless of how much it was hurting those they claimed to protect.

The spiderling tried. She learned how to reason with those who would not be reasoned with, to protect those she could and to honor those she couldn't. But it wasn't enough. The fighting continued. Her eldest sibling had nearly died, and it was only through the work she'd done already that she was able to save them, but it still wasn't enough. She could *only* save them, none of those they had fought alongside.

It wasn't enough. Perhaps it would never be enough.

So she turned to magic, to studying forces deeper and more dangerous than anything she had trifled with before. It was in her studies that she discovered the deepest magic there was to be found in Pharloom, the oldest magic there could be: that of the very gods. She learned a truth that had been forgotten, long-buried by time and by indifference.

The spiders once had a god that united them, in the land that had once been known as Pharloom, and would one day be known as Pharloom again. Their god had always been reclusive, however, and the spiders were anything but. As their interest in the wider world grew, so too did their interest in their god lessen. His power waned, with time—a terrible self-reinforcing cycle, for the more his power lessened, the less and less he *could* do for the spiders, and the less and less they remembered him.

He lingered on, all the same, long-forgotten. Until the day that the spiderling arrived with a will that would change the world.

"I can give you my power," the god of the spiders told his successor. "I give it to you freely, but with a warning: I know the past and the future, the beginning and the end, and I know that the power alone will not be enough for what you seek."

"What will?" asked the spiderling.

"A choice I was never strong enough to make," said the god of the spiders. "A sacrifice of who you were, for who you will become."

Seeing the confusion in her many eyes, the old god sighed, leaning too heavily on his cane, and went on, "To do more than see all, but to *change* all so drastically, to weave the world together as you desire... you will lose yourself, young one. But you will become much more."

The spiderling nodded. This, at least, made sense to her. "Why were you not strong enough?"

"Because," her god said, "I could not let go. Perhaps if I'd had more time, perhaps if I had known then all I do now... if I had known the cost it would take, and that I would not be the fool paying it. Perhaps, then, it could have been different. As it was, my loved ones would have lost me in an instant, as yours will too—but they would have been safe. I could have protected them."

The god sighed, seeing her trepidation, her doubts and her fears, and he went on, "If this is the path you choose—"

"There is no path better," said the spiderling.

"—then you *must* commit to it, fully and with all your being, or else you will end up like me." The god sighed again. "You do not wish to end up like me."

The spiderling did not wish to end up like him. The spiderling also was far from fond of the idea that her family would end up losing her, given that *her* motivation for seeking out this power in the first place was to avoid losing *them*. But something had to change, you see. Something had to give.

"Then I will commit," said the spiderling, "for I cannot choose another."

"I am sorry," said the god, his eyes filled with as much sadness as there was understanding. "May your people fare better than mine."

The old god gave her his power. He gave it to her freely, once she was forewarned of the cost it would come with. Heeding his warnings, she embraced that new power, and she began to work. To weave the very world together, to pay the necessary cost.

As the god of the spiders predicted, everything was gone of the young spiderling had been before. She became their new goddess, she who wove together the world—and though she ensured that her story would be passed on, her own family would not, or perhaps could not, remember her. As far as they remembered, there had always been eight siblings in their family. No more, and no less.

The spiders, those united at last by her, were our ancestors. We who revere her, and the sacrifice she made, began to call ourselves weavers in her honor, and have done so for generations upon generations since. Though we may travel far from the land of Pharloom, and though the land may change with time, her power remains strong, and so too does our sacred connection with her.

Remember, Hornet: a weaver can always find her way home.

---

"I... can't remember, necessarily, who told me that story," Hornet admits. "I'd like to think it was my mother, I know that it meant quite a lot to her, but we had... precious little time together, before she had to make a sacrifice of her own."

Though '*had to*' may not be the best way to put it, on her part. There were a great deal of political machinations in play from her mother and her father, the full extent of which Hornet *still* occasionally comes across remnants of, regarding the circumstances of her existence. The simplest way to put it is that Herrah the Beast had wanted an heir, and the Pale King had wanted strong-willed individuals to ensure the Hollow Knight's seals could never be broken from the outside any more than they could be from within their prison... as well as, he thought, a way to weaken Deepnest.

It's... entirely possible that Deepnest would have fallen to the Infection even without her mother's sacrifice. Hornet supposes she has no way of knowing, not for sure, what might have been. It's a dangerous thing, to wonder, but she has found herself doing that much more often than she should as of late.

"I'm sorry to hear that."

Hornet shrugs, and almost manages to make the motion an idle one. "It's alright. It was a long time ago."

She wishes she could be sure of how long it had been, but record-keeping was one of the first things to go in the fall of Hallownest, and Hornet had more important concerns such as survival. Such as doing what she could, when she could, to hold what little remained of the dying kingdom together.

"That isn't why you came here, though. Is it, Hornet of Hallownest?"

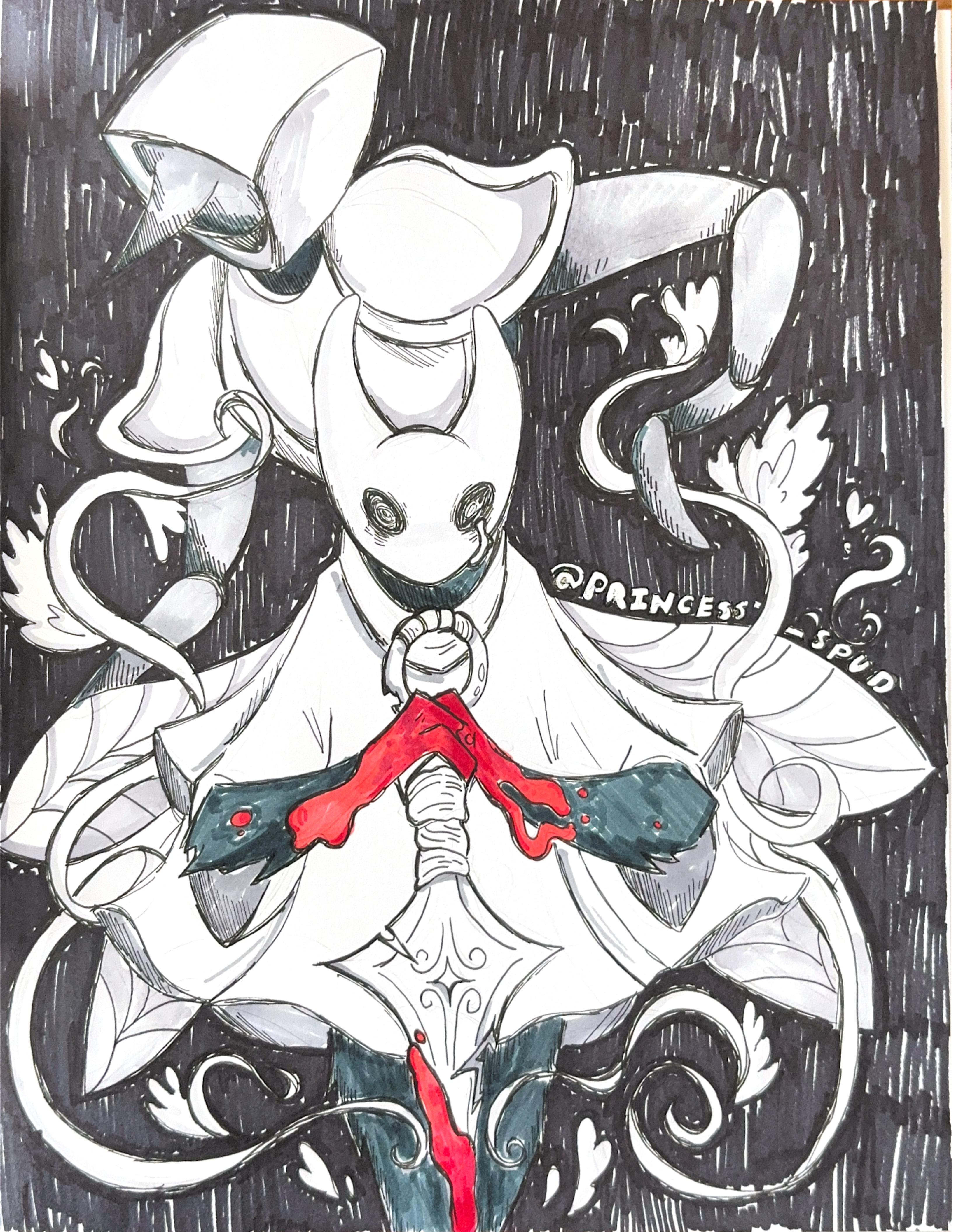
Hornet looks upon the weaver goddess from her mother's stories. She steels herself, insomuch as she can, for whatever answers she might find.

"No," she tells the goddess who wove the world together, "it isn't."

Artsy Fartsy Antics

THE GRUB AWAKENS
Hope doesn't always wear silk.

KENZAREA



# “I Can See Through Your Facade”

A monster had been set loose by a horrible accident.

The pilgrims with bell-shaped helmets and staffs equipped with magical runes were meant to carry it through the kingdom with ease—but, evidently, something went wrong during the transportation.

Strings of silk flared, and broke down the final bridge entering ***Pharloom***. The chariot fell down—with the monster in it still alive.

The little peasants scattered—some survived and remained stranded atop, some met their demise when their bell-shaped helmets shattered into tiny, glimmering pieces upon hitting the ground.

And now the monster was no longer contained within a magical spell—a song.

Thus, the King of Pharloom – a rather cruel bug – called for his most well-trained and disciplined guards to help secure what those pilgrims couldn’t. He called for the ***Steel Assassins.***

---

*This place was different. This wasn’t Hallownest—it was too lively and green for it to be Dirtmouth, and far too humid for Greenpath. Hornet found herself to be for the first time in her life, surrounded by unfamiliarity that brought about such unbearable unease in her chest.*

*She needed to go back. She needed to find a way out.*

---

Steel Assassin Sharpe—the captain of the group, stoic and elegant. He found the job of a killer to be fitting for his nonchalant personality. Yet he did bear some unspoken rules in his heart.

“We will find the monster, sire.” He always spoke in a formal manner, bowing deeply to the King of Pharloom. “We will find it, kill it and bring it to you.”

"Nay!" the king barked in response, "I require her alive! She'd be of great use… after all, she *is* the weaverling princess."

Sharpe had to admit—he wasn't entirely sure of the implications of that statement. But an order was an order. If he was to leave it intact and breathing—then so be it.

Step by step, the steel assassin was coming closer to his prey. One could even say that his feet mimicked a simplistic waltz whenever he was out on a hunt—whether it comforted his next victim or struck an even more profound fear within them ended up questionable. Sharpe was renowned for his sadistic hunting tactics, but a lot of the time, his colleagues could never pinpoint what was going on in that mysterious head of his.

Did he fantasize about the way his rapier could impale any beast's chitin? Some even theorized he purposefully set certain assignments free. The other assassins weren't sure how or why—but at the end of the day, they couldn't tell if it were simply all in their heads.

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*Everything was making a noise. A noise that screamed* ***danger****. Hornet couldn't give in to the paranoia, though—she ought to keep her wits sharp and sanity intact, despite being so far away from the Pale King's spells' reach. Would she lose her memory? Become a mere basin of whom she used to be?*

*No—nonsense. She was a pale being as well, even if she was only a halfling… That small reassurance comforted her, but not by much.*

*Someone was watching her. She was absolutely sure of that! It wasn't one of those critters that reminded her of Greenpath's mosscreeps so much, not even the flies resembling squits. It didn't sound like some beast or creature—those, she could dispatch in seconds. It was something much bigger—and more intelligent.*

*The realization hit her like the Hallownest's tram—she may have found a worthy opponent. Or rather* ***he*** *had found* ***her****.*

*She reached an area that gave her the strange feeling of being underwater. The Coral Forest.*

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Steel Assassin Sharpe inhaled the brisk, salty air of his favorite hunting grounds. Brushing against a glistening branch of coral would always send a tingle of exhilaration down his spine—not to mention those petite creatures swimming around, practically giving themselves away on a silver plate.

The other assassins were scattered staking out the various exits that were interconnected with the Coral Forest. Sharpe had told them: "*There's a higher chance the monster won't escape if we block all the exits.*" But little did they know, he had a completely different reason for desiring solitude when meeting this… '*monster*'.

His eyes widened when the king referred to his newly assigned prey as a she. And his interest was further piqued when he called her a *weaverling princess*. That meant she was sentient.

And Sharpe needed to see if this endeavour didn't break one of his moral codes. For that, unfortunately, his colleagues couldn't be around..

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They couldn't know.

*It's closer—no,* ***he's*** *closer. Hornet knew it was a bugkin following her around. She had seen his shadow, her own reflection in his sharp rapier just around a corner. No wonder, considering her current location—everything seemed to be, in some way, reflective!*

*She could manage it—she had defeated so many foes before with her deadly precision and skill with a needle and thread. But this place was making her head pound. She had trouble concentrating on any of the spells she learned back at home.*

*Home. Would she ever return? She could only hope.*

***A noise.***

*Hornet had heard it, and it signified an impending confrontation. Whoever had been following the spiderling had finally decided to show up. There was no running away anymore—she had to face* ***him****.*

Red cloak, needle in hand—Sharpe locked his eyes onto his prey, following her each and every move as she hastily scampered about, lost in a wonderland—or a nightmare, from her perspective. The weaverling princess appeared to be, frankly, quite small. The steel assassin couldn't comprehend how they all could give her that incredibly potent title—a ***monster***.

She had a pale mask with two long, thick horns. Most of her body was covered by her clothing, with only thin, dark legs and iridescent, delicate wings poking out from beneath. Sharpe needed to get closer to see more—to ***know*** more.

His prey abruptly stopped in her tracks—seemingly aware of his presence.

There was no use in beating around the bush anymore. Sharpe took a step forward, then another, and another until he elegantly waltzed in front of her—the "***monster***" he'd been assigned to hunt down.

"Greetings, little one." His voice took a note of disdain—she was even shorter than he anticipated at first. "I've had enough of you causing havoc across the whole Kingdom. Come with me willingly, and you may just stay alive."

Then, the realization hit him like a Marrow beast—her frame was so small because she was just a child.

"***Garama***!"

Sharpe's train of thought was broken, as a needle flung right by his face, leaving a hemolymph leaking wound behind. Before he could even register another movement, his prey was flying to him at full speed—her needle, the one that marked him, was impaled into a wall directly behind him, and the thread of silk connecting it to its owner was becoming *dangerously short.*

The good ole' trick of bringing oneself closer to the opponent.

***Slash***.

The steel assassin didn't lose his cool so easily and managed to slice the silk with his rapier. The little bug before him jerked backwards as she lost the momentum of her dash.

She quickly regained her senses and began performing well thought-out attacks. "Who are you?! Why have you been following me?!"

His prey sounded more angry and confused than terrified.

"***Why is everyone here out to kill me***?!"

No—it wasn't his prey anymore. One of the Assassin's moral codes in his line of work stated: ***absolutely no children***.

Sharpe inhaled briskly, and called out to the little bug: "Listen! I changed my mind!"

It was useless—she didn't even slow down with her feverish attacks and desperate war cries in a language he couldn't understand. His best guess was that she was attempting to cast some sort of spells, but it would always fall short—pehaps she was lacking in power or energy.

He could feel more threads of silk wrapping around his gloved hand. This was his chance to catch her attention—instead of letting it enclose on his wrist, he grabbed it and with full force jerked it toward him.

In a flash of red, she was right in front of him, in the firm grasp of his hands.

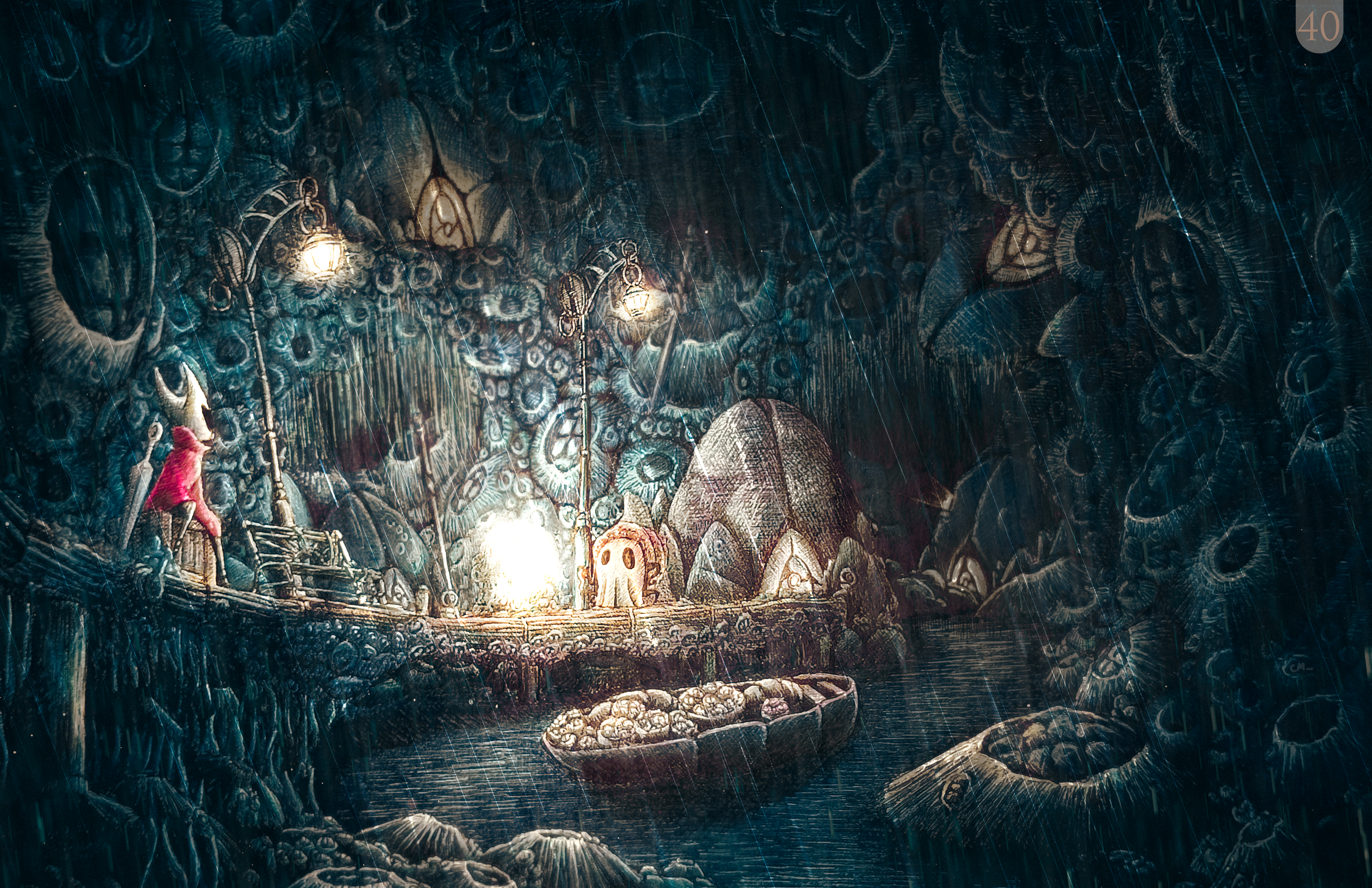
"Listen to me carefully now," Sharpe began in a low, hoarse voice. "I will not hurt—***GAH***!"

A stinging pain spread across his whole thorax. That kid just kicked him directly between his armor plates, sending him doubling over and clutching his stomach. As he fell to his knees, he could see her running away, disappearing from his foggy vision. He had some faith that she would survive. After all, she did manage to get away from ***him***. Steel Assassin Sharpe.

He slowly got back on his legs.

Maybe she escaped this time. But he would find her again. He will flip the whole Kingdom over if he must just to meet her once more. To hell with the steel assassins and a musketeer title! That was a bloody ***child***. Sharpe's new impulsive decision sent a warm shiver down his spine.

He will help her get back home. And keep his colleagues away from her.



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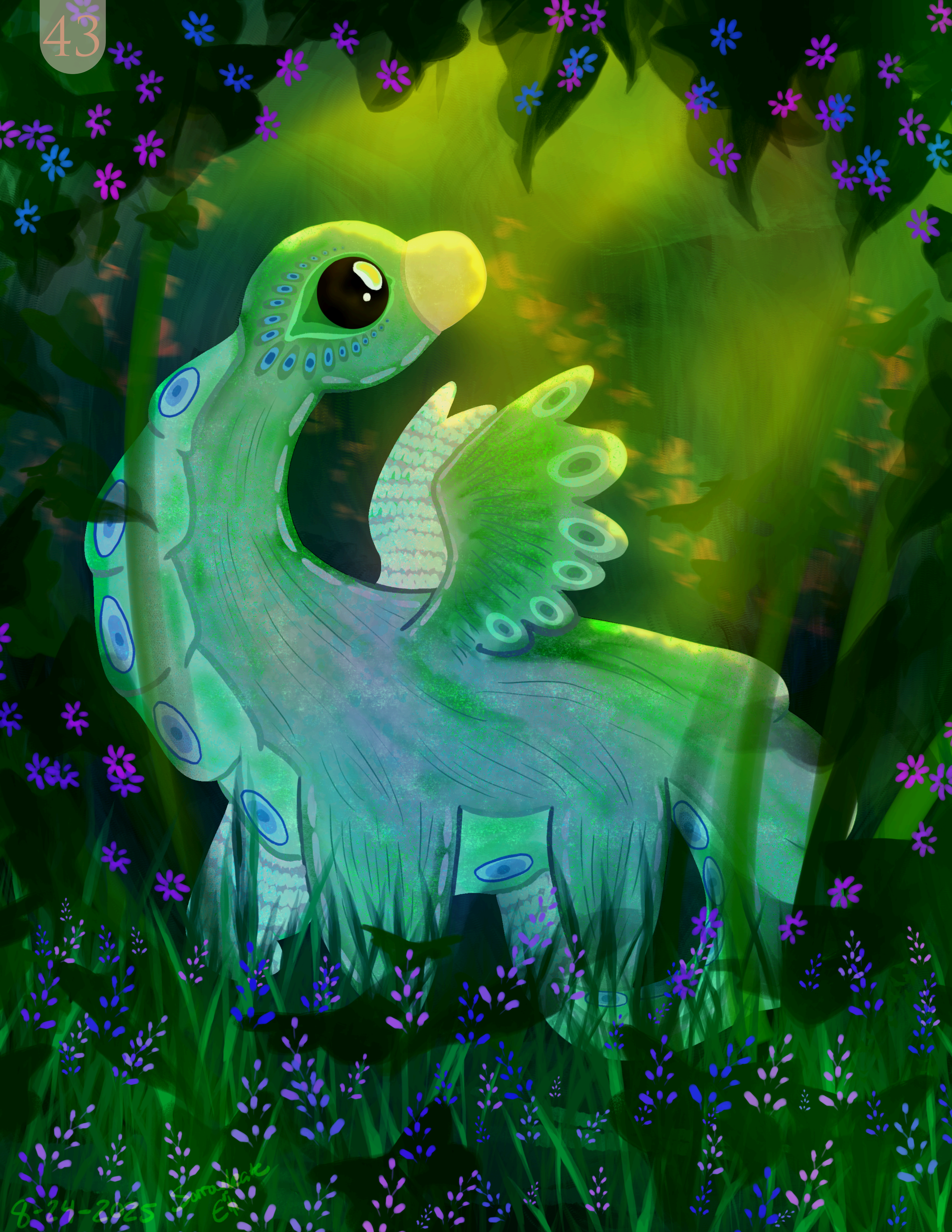
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